

## Message Text

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ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 AID-20 SS-20 H-03 DRC-01 RSC-01 SSO-00

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FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3235

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E.O. 11652 N/A

TAGS: EAID, VS

SUBJECT: ADDITIONAL MATERIAL FOR CONGRESSIONAL HEARINGS

FOR STEARNS, EA

REF: STATE 064431

1. YOU MAY WISH TO ANSWER THE QUESTIONS RAISED BY SENATOR BROOKE BY SAYING THAT YOU HAD RELAYED HIS QUESTIONS TO ME AND THAT I HAD RESPONDED WITH THE FOLLOWING LETTER.

BEGIN QUOTE:

DEAR SENATOR BROOKE:

I HAVE BEEN INFORMED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE THAT IN RECENT HEARINGS HELD BY SENATOR INOUE'S SUB-COMMITTEE YOU RAISED THE QUITE NATURAL AND PROPER QUESTION OF WHETHER OR NOT THE EMBASSY MIGHT NOT HAVE RELIED TOO MUCH ON DATA PROVIDED BY THE GOVERNMENT OF VIET-NAM IN REACHING THE CONCLUSION, RECORDED IN THE EMBASSY'S AIRGRAM A-296, THAT THE TOTAL PRISON POPULATION WITHIN THE REPUBLIC OF VIET-NAM DID NOT EXCEED 35,000.

THE ANSWER IS THAT WE ARRIVED AT THAT TOTAL QUITE INDEPENDENTLY, DURING MY CONFIRMATION HEARING LAST SPRING SENATOR PERCY ASKED ME QUITE SPECIFICALLY TO MAKE A COMPLETELY OBJECTIVE EXAMINATION OF THE VARIETY OF CHARGES REGARDING PRISONS IN THE REPUBLIC OF VIET-NAM

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THAT HAVE RECEIVED WIDE CIRCULATION. I DID SO, UTILIZING

THE TOTALITY OF THE NOT INCONSIDERABLE RESOURCES AVAILABLE TO THIS MISSION IN A LONG, PAINSTAKING AND COMPLETELY THOROUGH STUDY. MY INSTRUCTIONS TO THE STAFF WERE TO COME UP WITH THE FACTS AND THAT ANY ELEMENTS THAT COULD NOT BE COMPLETELY SUPPORTED AND WOULD REQUIRE ESTIMATES BE CLEARLY IDENTIFIED AND SET ASIDE FOR FURTHER RESEARCH. THE CONCLUSIONS FINALLY RECORDED IN A-296 WERE PERSONALLY REVIEWED BY ME. AS YOU WILL NOTE, WE CLEARLY IDENTIFIED ONE OR TWO MINOR CATEGORIES AS "SOFT SPOTS" IN OUR EARLIER ESTIMATE ALTHOUGH SUBSEQUENT CHECKS AND CROSS-CHECKS CONFIRMED THAT THESE IN NO WAY AFFECTED THE VALIDITY OF THE FINAL TOTAL.

IT WAS POINTED OUT TO ME THAT TO LEAVE IN THE FINAL TEXT THE REFERENCE TO THE "SOFT SPOTS" PROVIDED AN OPPORTUNITY FOR THOSE SO INCLINED TO AGAIN ENGAGE IN DISTORTION. NEVERTHELESS, THE LANGUAGE WAS RETAINED IN ORDER TO INSURE THAT THIS REPORT, AS WELL AS ALL OTHERS SENT UNDER MY NAME, WAS TOTALLY AND COMPLETELY CORRECT. INTERESTINGLY, THE TYPE OF DISTORTION ANTICIPATED AS POSSIBLE DID ACTUALLY OCCUR DURING AN INTERVIEW OF MR. ROBERT RANSON ON THE NBC TODAY SHOW ON FEBRUARY 5. A COMPARISON OF HIS REMARKS WITH BOTH THE REPORT ITSELF AND THE DETAILED RECORD OF MY CONVERSATION WITH HIS GROUP WHICH HAS BEEN PROVIDED TO THE HOUSE FOREIGN AFFAIRS COMMITTEE AND THE DEPARTMENT PROVIDES A RATHER STRIKING COMMENTARY ON THE CREDIBILITY OF THAT GROUP.

ALTHOUGH IT IS TRUE THAT ADVISORY RELATIONSHIPS WERE TERMINATED A YEAR AGO, WE HAVE OTHER METHODS AND SOURCES WHICH ENABLE US TO KEEP ACCURATELY INFORMED OF THE SIZE OF THE PRISON POPULATION. I WILL BE GLAD TO DESCRIBE THESE TO YOU PERSONALLY AND I AM CERTAIN YOU WILL FIND THAT THEY COMPEL THE SAME CONCLUSION THAT I HAVE REACHED AND REPORTED. ADDITIONALLY, WE STILL MAINTAIN NORMAL CONSULAR ACCESS TO PRISONS AND PRISONERS, NOT ONLY IN SAIGON BUT IN THE MAJOR PRISONS ELSEWHERE IN THE COUNTRY. WHILE THESE VISITS ARE ROUTINE AND NORMAL CONSULAR ACTIVITIES, THEY DO GIVE US AN OPPORTUNITY TO OBSERVE ANY CHANGES AND MAKE SPOT CHECKS WHICH ENABLE US TO CROSS-CHECK FACTS OBTAINED SEPARATELY.

I MIGHT ADD THAT SINCE THAT REPORT, THE EXCHANGE OF PRISONERS CALLED FOR IN THE PARIS AGREEMENT WAS FINALLY PERMITTED OFFICIAL USE

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MITTED BY THE DRVN AND THE SO-CALL "PRG" TO BE COMPLETED. WITH THE RETURN OF 3,636 BY THE RVN, OUR CURRENT CONCLUSION IS THAT THE TOTAL PRISON POPULATION IN THE RVN IS NOW JUST OVER 30,000. THIS HAS JUST BEEN REDUCED BY ANOTHER 420 RELEASED UNDER A GENERAL AMNESTY ANNOUNCED BY THE PRESIDENT IN COMMEMORATION OF FARMER'S DAY, THE HIGHLY SUCCESSFUL VIETNAMESE LAND REFORM PROGRAM.

WITH MY RESPECT AND MY PERSONAL REGARDS,

SINCERELY,  
GRAHAM MARTIN

END QUOTE.

2. IF YOU USE THE LETTER IT MUST, OF COURSE, BE USED WITHOUT CHANGE. IF YOU DECIDE TO USE THE INFORMATION CONTAINED THEREIN, YOU MAY ADD THAT WE DO NOT RELY ON GVN-PROVIDED DATA AND AS FAR AS I AM AWARE THE GVN DOES NOT PROVIDE ANY DETAILED INFORMATION ON PRISON POPULATION TO ANY ELEMENT OF THE AMERICAN EMBASSY.

3. OUR DETAILED KNOWLEDGE, FOR THE PRIVATE INFORMATION OF SENATOR BROOKE ONLY, IS OBTAINED THROUGH THE TRADITIONAL METHODS OF INTELLIGENCE COLLECTION. THE RESULTS OF SUCH COLLECTION INCLUDE FIRM INFORMATION ON SPECIFIC NUMBERS OF PRISONERS IN EACH INSTALLATION. IT SHOULD BE NOTED, OF COURSE, THAT PRISON POPULATION IS NOT CONSTANT BUT AS IN EVERY OTHER COUNTRY, INCLUDING THE UNITED STATES, IS FLUCTUATING. AT PRESENT, FOR EXAMPLE, THE PRISON POPULATION OF SOUTH VIET-NAM IS CONSIDERABLY UNDER 35,000 -- PROBABLY AROUND 30,000 BECAUSE OF THE SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETED EXCHANGE OF CIVILIAN DETAINEES WITH THE PRG AND THE AMNESTY OF 420 CONVICTED INDIVIDUALS ON THE OCCASION OF FARMER'S DAY NATIONAL HOLIDAY 26 MARCH.

4. SINCE THERE IS NOW A LEGISLATIVE BAN ON ALL SUPPORT TO THE POLICE AND PRISON ADMINISTRATION IN VIET-NAM, WE ARE HARDLY IN A POSITION TO MAKE VISITS TO PRISONS AND OTHERWISE CONCERN OURSELVES OVERTLY WITH THE VIETNAMESE ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE, EXCEPT IN LINE WITH CONSULAR RESPONSIBILITIES PERTAINING TO THE PROTECTION OF AMERICAN CITIZENS, THEREFORE WE MUST RELY ON TRADITIONAL METHODS OF INTELLIGENCE COLLECTION FOR ALL THE DESIRED INFORMATION IN THIS SENSITIVE AREA.

5. PLEASE LET US KNOW IF THERE IS ANYTHING ELSE ON THIS SUBJECT  
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YOU MAY NEED AND WHICH WAY YOU DECIDE TO HANDLE IT.  
MARTIN

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## Message Attributes

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